



# Massachusetts Natural Heritage Program

Natural Heritage & Endangered  
Species Program  
MA Division of Fisheries & Wildlife  
Route 135  
Westborough, MA 01581-3337  
508-792-7270 x 200

## MASSACHUSETTS RARE AND ENDANGERED PLANTS

### WRIGHT'S PANIC-GRASS

(Dichanthelium wrightianum (Scribn.) Freckmann)

#### DESCRIPTION

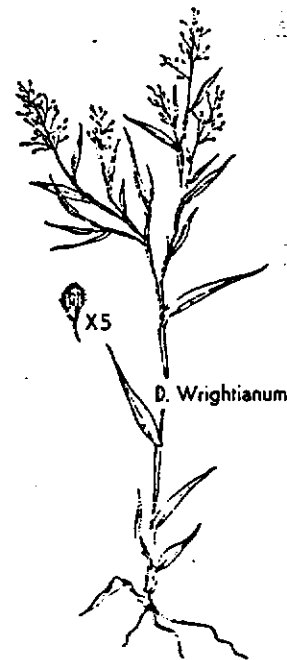
Wright's Panic-grass is a small (4-12 in, 10-30 cm, taller southward in its range) sparsely hairy grass with relatively few slender leaves. One to a few small delicate inflorescences are produced atop the stems. Spikelets (fruits) are less than 1 mm long, the smallest of any member of this large genus. Flowering and fruiting occur from early July to September.

#### SIMILAR SPECIES IN MASSACHUSETTS

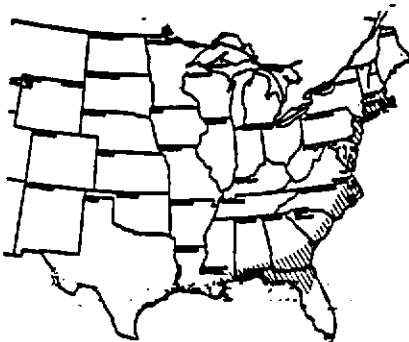
Matted Panic-grass (Dichanthelium meridionale) resembles Wright's Panic-grass and grows in the same habitat. However, Matted Panic-grass is covered with short hairs (rather than the sparse hair of Wright's) and has some long hairs on the stem and leaves. Its spikelets are longer than those of Wright's, being about 1.5 mm long.

#### HABITAT IN MASSACHUSETTS

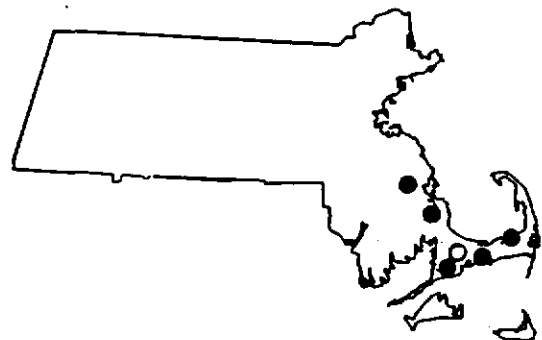
Wright's Panic-grass grows in dense patches on the exposed upper margins of sandy to peaty fresh water ponds on the coastal plain. The survival of Coastal Plain pondshore species is dependent on the pronounced seasonal fluctuation of the water levels of these kettle hole ponds which have no inlet or outlet. Water levels are determined by the amount of rainfall and movement of groundwater, generally rising in the winter and spring and lowering in the summer and fall. Wright's Panic-grass grows  
(continued overleaf)



Gleason, M.A. The New Britain and Brown  
Illustrated Flora of the Northeastern U.S.  
and Adjacent Canada. New York Botanical Garden,  
1952.



Distribution of Dichanthelium wrightianum



- Verified since 1978
- Reported prior to 1978

Distribution in Massachusetts by Town

in association with Plymouth Gentian (Sabatia kennedyana) and Threadleaf Sundew (Drosera filiformis).

#### RANGE

This species occurs sporadically along the coastal plain from southeastern Massachusetts to Florida and Mississippi.

#### POPULATION STATUS

Wright's Panic-grass is listed as a species of "Special Concern" in Massachusetts. It is known from 27 current locations (since 1978) and 4 historical locations (before 1978) in Massachusetts.

As with all the pondshore species there has been a loss of habitat through development of pondshores for housing and recreational use. Lowering of water quality in the ponds by run-off and leaking septic systems and alteration of the water table have also reduced available habitat. Like other pondshore species, Wright's Panic-grass varies in abundance from year to year depending on water level. It may survive in a dormant state or as a seed for one or more years when conditions are unfavorable.